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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000137

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR DAS BRYZA, EUR/SE, EUR/CARC

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TAGS: PREL PGOV AJ AM GG RU TU XY

SUBJECT: DAS BRYZA DISCUSSES SOUTH CAUCASUS WITH GOT

REF: A. TBILISI 57

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Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: MFA Deputy U/S for Eastern Europe and South Caucasus Unal Cevikoz emphasized to visiting DAS Bryza and the Ambassador January 16 the importance Turkey attaches to the continuation of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). Cevikoz said Turkey would support a UNOMIG extension at the UNSC and stressed that Western allies should come together on the issue and discuss proposals with Russia in advance. Bryza agreed, but said we should not take a step that enhances the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia. Cevikoz informed Bryza that the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) would meet in Istanbul for a second time January 26 at the Deputy Minister-level; the Georgians have not yet confirmed their participation, but the Turks believe they remain positive. The CSCP, said Cevikoz, affords Tbilisi a forum in which to engage Moscow as an equal, without participation by the Abkhaz or South Ossetians. The Turks hope to finalize a concept paper that will describe how the platform will interact with other governments and international organizations.

12. (S) SUMMARY CONT'D: Cevikoz and Bryza shared the view that Armenian President Sargsian and Azerbaijani President Aliyev are serious about resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K) conflict; Cevikoz said Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov is also becoming constructive, reportedly telling the Turks that a deal may be possible by June. Cevikoz underlined that there is no N-K precondition for Turkey on normalizing relations with Armenia, though the issues complement each other, and Turkey needs clear endorsement of an historical commission to discuss the events of 1915. END SUMMARY.

GEORGIA/CSCP

13. (C) Cevikoz emphasized the importance Turkey attaches to the continuation of UNOMIG. We need an international presence in Abkhazia, he said, and if the Russians behave like they did at the OSCE, we have a problem. Turkey will support a prolongation of the mission at the UNSC, but Russia, which is unhappy with the mission's name, needs to be persuaded. Bryza agreed we need a mission. But a red line is that we do not want to take any step that enhances the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia. The Russians are emboldened for not having paid a serious diplomatic price for killing the OSCE mandate in Georgia last December and not implementing their cease-fire commitments. Rather than beginning UNOMIG renewal negotiations by agreeing to compromise on UNOMIG's name,

Bryza recommended proposing a technical rollover of UNOMIG, which the Russians might oppose because it includes a reference to UNSCR 1808 affirming Georgia's territorial integrity. If the Russians block the rollover idea, then we can move to a compromise text, as proposed by Germany, which would agree to drop the reference to "Georgia" in the name of the mission, but without further undercutting Georgia's territorial integrity.

¶ 14. (C) Cevikoz stressed that Western allies should come together on this. Russia, which will seek to exploit any divisions, should be consulted in advance; the U.S., he said, is in the best position to do this. Bryza agreed, noting that we had decided recently to pursue such an approach. Cevikoz asked for Bryza's prognosis on the fourth round of Geneva talks on Abkhazia. Bryza said the Geneva talks could still usefully develop a dispute resolution mechanism, facilitate IDP returns, and ensure humanitarian access to the separatist regions, though the prospects for negotiating a political solution were dim; while Abkhazia was not openly obstructionist, South Ossetia was bombastic and Russia was not actively helpful.

¶ 15. (C) Cevikoz noted that the CSCP would be meeting for a second time January 26 in Istanbul at the Deputy Minister-level. The Russians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis were confirmed; Georgian participation was not yet confirmed, but Cevikoz said he believes the Georgians -- who participated at the first CSCP meeting in Helsinki -- remain positive on the process and would attend. (NOTE: The Turkish delegation was to be led by Cevikoz. Our contacts informed us that Russia

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would be represented by Deputy FM Titov, Azerbaijan by Deputy FM Azimov, and Armenia by Deputy FM Shavarsh Kocharyan -- not usual Turkey interlocutor Deputy FM Kirakossian. We will report on the meeting septel. END NOTE.) Georgia, according to Cevikoz, values the CSCP as a forum in which Tbilisi can engage Moscow as an equal, without any participation by the separatist regimes. Cevikoz said Turkey hoped to finalize a concept paper in Istanbul on a strategic vision for the CSCP and how it will interact with other governments and international organizations. Cevikoz foresaw good cooperation with the EU "Eastern Partnership," which has been extended to the South Caucasus. He said the EU should move quickly on enhancing its partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia, lest Moscow view the "Eastern Partnership" as anti-Russia. Bryza underscored that the U.S. is not opposed to the CSCP and, despite earlier Turkish misperceptions, is not discouraging Georgian participation.

¶ 16. (C) Bryza asked Cevikoz for his assessment of the political situation in Tbilisi. Cevikoz described Irakli Alasania as an interesting and important figure, if he chooses to engage in domestic politics in a serious manner. Cevikoz agreed with Bryza that Saakashvili's position will be strengthened if Georgia can get through the winter without a serious energy crisis. The Georgia-Azerbaijan gas agreement is a significant development in this regard; Bryza pointed to it as an example of how Turkish energy cooperation contributes to regional stability. Cevikoz also pointed to the recent MOU between Russian electricity firm RAO and Georgia over management of the Enguri Dam (ref A) as another stabilizing factor in Georgia. Bryza told Cevikoz that he believes Alasania has now chosen a less confrontational approach, focusing on Georgia's need for unity and patience rather than early elections or street demonstrations. But Alasania is worried he might "miss his moment."

N-K/TURKEY-ARMENIA

¶ 17. (S) Bryza and Cevikoz agreed that Presidents Aliyev and Sargsian view each other as serious in desiring a resolution of the N-K conflict, even as the ministers keep jabbing. Cevikoz said Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov is becoming constructive, telling the Turks a deal on the Basic

Principles might be possible in June. This, in turn, could help facilitate normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations. Cevikoz suggested that the U.S. urge Azerbaijan to offer Armenia a non-use of force pledge in exchange for Armenian withdrawal from five of the occupied provinces of Azerbaijan.

Such a move would catalyze positive, reciprocal steps by both sides and allow Turkey to move ahead in normalizing relations with Armenia.

¶ 8. (S) Bryza said Azerbaijan viewed the Russian invasion of Georgia as threatening Azerbaijan's corridor to the West, leading the GOAJ to recognize privately the potential benefits to Azerbaijan of an additional corridor that would arise from normalized Turkey-Armenia relations. He asked if Aliyev was insisting on Turkey opening the border with Armenia only after Azerbaijan and Armenia concluded a full agreement on N-K, agreed just on the Basic Principles, or simply achieved momentum in negotiations. In an important clarification, Cevikoz suggested that if Armenia made a significant move, for example, pulling its troops out of five of the Azerbaijani provinces it occupies, Ankara might be able to finalize its agreement with Yerevan. Bryza welcomed this step away from demanding a full-blown N-K agreement as a precondition for normalized relations with Armenia, but warned that Armenia was unlikely to withdraw troops outside the context of a full agreement on the Basic Principles, which provides a balanced package.

¶ 9. (S) Cevikoz stated that Armenia should understand that the objectives of the Diaspora differ from those of Armenians and their government. Bryza said GOAM leaders and the opposition recognize that passage in the U.S. Congress of an Armenian genocide resolution could make it difficult -- if not impossible -- for Turkey to normalize relations and open its border with Armenia. At the same time, the strategic benefits to Turkey of normalized relations with Armenia are huge, Bryza and the Ambassador emphasized. Turkey too will lose if it is unable to persuade the Armenians on a commission and the deal falls through.

¶ 10. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this message.

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Jeffrey